

Sermon preached by Mr. F. I. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on
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Text: Isaiah iii.10.11.

We might well say that if we read this text and then the 37th Psalm (which had been read), you would have a better sermon on the text than I could ever pretend to preach; and that Psalm and these two verses express the whole of mankind - the righteous and the wicked. It would indeed be a wonderful congregation if we all in the sight of God appear in this 10th verse. We are either in the 10th or in the 11th, and there is a message to both.

"Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him." The central point of that 37th Psalm is this: "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked". A little better than a lot. And that Psalm is written for the comfort of distracted, distressed souls. The text itself came into my mind coming here this evening. Through the Races, the whole Bus system is dislocated by a thirst for pleasure and gambling. It makes this Psalm exceedingly precious. The way that things go on in the country would, if we were left to nothing else, exasperate us and bring to the top the very worst of spirits, and rebellion, and enmity. But oh how quieting is the spirit of this Psalm: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as a green herb". What a mercy it is to have the eyes opened to see light in God's light! I cannot point the finger to any. "Who maketh thee to differ?" It will be a mercy if we are made to differ from what we once were. That is the most important difference. That is the most important separation. For if we come out of the world and yet are destitute of the life and grace of God in our souls, that will be to no purpose; and it is for that reason that the character is so conspicuous in the Psalm and in the text. It is the righteous.

Another thing is noticeable, that in this 3rd of Isaiah, the whole of it concerns the wicked, except the 10th verse. The chapter speaks of the "great confusion that cometh by sin, the impudency of the people, the oppression and covetousness of the rulers, the judgments which shall be for the pride of the women"; and just the 10th verse belongs to the righteous. You can almost visualize the little remnant according to the election of grace, who look as though they will be swept away; and yet they are the only safe people on the earth. Isaiah says later, "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks", and that refers to the divine perfections of Jehovah which surround the church and every child of God. "I will be", says the Lord, "a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst". Oh then, how happy is that little flock, Who safe beneath their guardian Rock, In all commotions rest!"

"Say ye to the righteous." Not the self-righteous Pharisee. What constitutes a righteous person? There is only one thing really. It is to have union with the Lord Jesus Christ, to be so united to Him by regeneration, the work of the Holy Ghost in effectual calling, that Christ becomes All in all to us, our Head, our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption; that all that He is and has accomplished is for us. The righteousness that He wrought out stitch by stitch in His sacred humanity, the thoughts that He thought, not one foolish thought, the perfection of his holy blessed life as a substi

tution for His people, as was His birth. His sinless immaculate birth is a substitute for theirs, as they are born in sin and shapen in iniquity. Nothing can render a sinner righteous except eternal union with the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to partake of the vital benefits of His Person and His work.

John "Say ye to the righteous." How are we to know whether we are one of them? Well, ~~the~~ tells us: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous"; not by his doings or works, but by the fruits of righteousness. The effect of the preaching of the Lord Jesus was this, that they "should be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified". And this righteousness, this effectual calling results from sovereign election. Everything in vital experience is definitely connected with the purposes of God and His eternal decrees in the covenant of grace. It is a very important and blessed truth. You will never know anything, you will never be possessed of eternal life in your soul, Christ will never be precious to you, you will never hunger and thirst after Him, unless you were given unto Christ in the covenant. That is a consideration that will strengthen feeble faith. If ever you have felt to hunger and thirst after the living God, it is a token for good that you are His. Every effect in the soul by the Holy Ghost that moves a sinner Godward, partakes of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is indeed an unspeakable mercy to be conscious of the least thing in your heart that God has done, and if He has done anything, He will do it all. So the Apostle shows that beautiful chain, or what I have sometimes called those "secret stairs" which show the path to heaven and the source of it: "Whom He did foreknow, them He also predestinated; and whom He predestinated, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified". There are the footsteps of the flock, "the secret places of the stairs"; that is, where the Lord sees His poor trembling doves: "O My dove! that art in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely". Now these are the righteous, and there is a message for them. But the Lord gave them a message just before He departed from them: "These things" - and the text is one of them - "these things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". Therefore "say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him". And all the shalls and wills of Jehovah are unconditional. No condition about them at all. As with the promises, they are all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus". And the shalls and wills of God are filled with omnipotence, immutability. His shalls and wills also contain His omniscience and omnipresence; for "He sees us when we see not Him, And always hears our cry".

"Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him" unconditionally. It matters not where he is, how much he is afflicted. There is no condition too deplorable, there is no darkness, no desertion, no loss, no cross, no calamity, which will exclude this most gracious message: "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him". It shall be well with him because God says so. Job - a man afflicted perhaps more than any - in the midst of his affliction, when his faith was fixed upon Jehovah said, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger". And the whole strength and authority of the text lie in the fact of the blessed,

infinite, eternal God, and when faith sees Him, you can look at everything else, and then faith can "laugh at impossibilities and say, I shall be done".

"Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him" from the cradle to the grave; and through the grave into eternal glory, it shall be well. It shall be well with the righteous because the work is finished. The glorious Forerunner has run so that He has gone into every place and condition that His people will ever come into. I am persuaded that it is true to say that the Word of God enters into every particular in our life's minutest circumstance; and you can never get into a place or position that the Word does not reach. It makes God exceedingly great. I believe that some - all doubtless, of our hymn-writers who wrote under the influence of the Spirit - not that the hymns are inspired; but they had some blessed views of this great God. Watts did in writing the first Hymn. As also when we sing:

"Had I sight of Thee, my God,
Kingdoms and men would vanish soon;
Vanish as though I saw them not,
As a dim candle dies at noon".

Do you know anything about this? Because if we do, and if one is speaking the truth, you know these things in your experience, and in that measure you know God. It is a blessed knowledge. It is eternal life to know Him. And some of you may know Him in that measure; may not feel or be able to assert that He is your God, but you know Him as He alone that can save you, that can deliver you, He alone who can bless you, and without Him you feel that you will be eternally undone. Well, it is not small mercy to know Him objectively in that way, and those who thus know Him so that they are feeling after Him and waiting for Him, will know Him possessively before they die. And these righteous will then be able to join with this same prophet: "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him; He will save us".

"Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him." He tries the righteous. He will try these righteous people by bringing them into darkness and not into light. He tried dear Job by allowing the devil to afflict and tempt him. He tried David, left him under the reproach of men. There were those that said daily unto him, "Where is now thy God? Look David, where is there any evidence of Him? Saul and his men are round about you. You have entered into a city with gates and bars, and you will never get out; where is now thy God?" But there was a messenger came to Saul, and said that the Philistines had invaded the land. Therefore he had to leave David alone, and return against the Philistines. "It shall be well with them" whatever danger, calamities, however strong the enemy, and however malignant the disease.

And well with him too notwithstanding sin. It is because of the victory that Christ gained. Why, Paul challenges every other power: "Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or peril, or nakedness, or sword? No, "say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him". Says Paul, we are not only conquerors, we have possession of the prize, we take the good land in possession. Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him in all the pathway of life, and well when called to die. Yes, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints". Why? Because in

the death of His saints He sees the travail of His soul, one more that has been redeemed by the merit of His Person and work. He sees the conquest of His grace, the work of the Holy Ghost. He sees a sinner complete in Him. "It shall be well with him."

"For they shall eat the fruit of their doings." So there seem to be some "doings" about this. James says, "Faith without works is dead". What then are these doings? They are the works of faith, and perhaps one of the main works of faith is prayer; and when they eat the fruit of their doings, it will be answers to their prayers. I have been impressed by that word in the 5th of Ecclesiastes. It closes with the example of the death of a gracious rich man, and a gracious poor man, and it says, "They shall not much remember the days of their life, because God answereth him in the joy of his heart". So that that man must be a praying man, or there would be nothing to answer when he came to die. The rich man will not remember much the days of his life, and say, "I wish I had not got to die. I have this lovely mansion and estate". And as Solomon with all his possessions he says, "Vanity of vanities". Why? His faith had seen something better. So he did not much remember the days of his life, because God answered him in the joy of his heart. Poor Lazarus died and was carried into the bosom of Abraham in heaven. He did not much remember the days of his life, and did not say, "Well, other people did not have the poverty and vexation that I have had. I have had a poor, miserable, groaning life." No, he shall not much remember it, because God answered him to the joy of his heart. Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him under every condition while he lives, and well when he comes to die.

Why is this really? Why, because he is made a partaker of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Oh he dies a rich man, who dies a pauper in this world! It brings to my mind an actual case that I came into contact with many years ago in visiting what was then called the Workhouse, and I saw there an old white-headed man with a very gracious countenance; and I said to him, "Why are you here?" He said, "I am paralysed from my waist downward, and they put me in here". I did not know him. I said, "Then you have got nothing to live for". He said, "Nothing". I said, "Have you got anything to die for?" He said, "Yes; my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness". So you can go to the hospitals, to the most distressing cases, and say to the righteous, it shall be well with them. Blessed people!

"For they shall eat the fruit of their doings." Seekers will find what they have been seeking; askers will receive; knockers will have the doors opened to them; and those that have looked for the Lord Jesus, unto them will He come the second time, without sin unto salvation. Oh my friends, what a blessed thing is the death of a pilgrim! We ought really to rejoice. There is not a more glorious day than the day of one's death, "absent from the body, present with the Lord". I know we cannot every moment and every day feel it to be so. David did not - and I have been looking a little at that to-day: "Oh spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more". But if we believe what we profess, we feel a little of the blessedness, the glory of the kingdom of God here, and the gathering together of His dear people. Sometimes when his presence is felt and there is a translation, a transformation, in your soul, which brings you to the very gates of heaven, then you can understand the Apostle Paul when he said that he would rather be with Christ, which is far better. "If

such the sweetness of the streams" in communion with His saints in Zion, what must it be to enter into that eternal Sabbath, and that congregation which will never break up?

"Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him; for he shall eat of the fruit of his doings." Yes, eternally; for "He will lead them to fountains of living waters". Oh that is where they will eat the fruit of their doings - in heaven! Weary they are here, of earth, and self, and sin. Oh to have that evidence of being one of His sheep! "My sheep hear My voice"; and to hear that voice distinctly by His Spirit when you close your eyes in death, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, I will give you rest". They shall eat ~~of~~ of the fruit of their doings; they shall enter into rest.

X "Woe unto the wicked." Yes, David saw the wicked spreading himself like a green bay tree, yet he passed away. "Woe unto the wicked; it shall be ill with him" - and that is equally unconditional. It matters not what he possesses here, what mansion he lives in, what luxuries he enjoys, what pleasures he has, it will be ill with him. The righteous man is blessed in his worst things; the wicked man is cursed in his best things. Everything has the curse of God upon it. Would you change? Very solemn, these two verses! I wont say that those who are in the 11th verse can never be brought into the 10th. This is blessedly certain, that those that are in the 10th verse will never die in the 11th. "Woe unto the wicked", that is, to the wicked that are born and live and die without being born again. "It shall be ill with him." Oh what a view it gives us of the whole human race as we move about, and go here and there! Oh that the Lord would impress it, by His Spirit, upon the hearts of His people for their encouragement, that they might be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and as you move about and your cup seems filled with gall, to hear this divine voice: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers"!

"Woe unto the wicked; it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." It will be a reward. How is that? Because the wages of sin is death; it is wages. They earn it. You will never earn heaven. No, that is the gift of God. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Doesn't it make you feel that you will cleave unto the truth and to the Lord? Doesn't it give you that energy and courage with Esther? See the conditions those Jews were in. It seems as though the Jews throughout the world have been the object of attack through all generations; and that wretched Haman would have destroyed the Jews. That was the condition; what about it? "Say ye, it shall be well with him." Esther said, "I will go in unto the king. It is not according to the law; but law or no law, such is our state, our condition, I will go in, and if I perish, I will perish". Venturing faith. The Lord honours it.

"Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; and the reward of his hands shall be given him." And what about his hands? Well, according to the Revelation, he has the mark of the beast in his hands. And those who fear God are at a disadvantage in the commercial world, and we read that the time will come that they shall not be able to buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast in their hands and forehead. But they will get the reward of their hands. Oh may it bring us into a concern, and send us home in secret before the Lord, to give Him rest until by His Spirit He puts us inside the 10th verse! "Yes", they can sing with humble boldness, "I to the end shall endure"&c. Amen